

No. 57. An act relating to competency to stand trial and insanity as a defense.

(S.3)

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

* * * Competency to Stand Trial and Sanity at the Time of the Offense * * *

Sec. 1. 13 V.S.A. § 4816 is amended to read:

§ 4816. SCOPE OF EXAMINATION; REPORT; EVIDENCE

(a) Examinations provided for in section 4815 of this title shall have reference to one or both of the following:

(1) ~~mental~~ Mental competency of the person examined to stand trial for the alleged offense; ~~and~~.

(2) ~~sanity~~ Sanity of the person examined at the time of the alleged offense.

(b) A competency evaluation for an individual thought to have a developmental disability shall include a current evaluation by a psychologist skilled in assessing individuals with developmental disabilities.

(c)(1) As soon as practicable after the examination has been completed, the examining psychiatrist or, if applicable under subsection 4816(b) of this title, the psychiatrist and the psychologist, ~~if applicable~~, shall prepare a report containing findings in regard to ~~each of the matters listed in~~ applicable provisions of subsection (a) of this section. The report shall be transmitted to the court issuing the order for examination, and copies of the report sent to the State's Attorney, ~~and~~, to the respondent, to the respondent's attorney if the

respondent is represented by counsel, to the Commissioner of Mental Health, and, if applicable, to the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living.

(2) If the court orders examination of both the person's competency to stand trial and the person's sanity at the time of the alleged offense, those opinions shall be presented in separate reports and addressed separately by the court. In such cases, the examination of the person's sanity shall only be undertaken if the psychiatrist or, if applicable under subsection 4816(b) of this title, the psychiatrist and the psychologist are able to form the opinion that the person is competent to stand trial, unless the defendant requests that the examinations occur concurrently. If the evaluation of the defendant's sanity at the time of the alleged offense does not occur until the defendant is deemed competent to stand trial, the psychiatrist or, if applicable under subsection 4816(b) of this title, the psychiatrist and the psychologist shall make a reasonable effort to collect and preserve any evidence necessary to form an opinion as to sanity if the person regains competence.

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Sec. 2. 13 V.S.A. § 4820 is amended to read:

§ 4820. HEARING REGARDING COMMITMENT

(a) When a person charged on information, complaint, or indictment with a criminal offense:

(1) Is reported by the examining psychiatrist following examination pursuant to sections 4814–4816 of this title to have been insane at the time of the alleged offense.

(2) Is found upon hearing pursuant to section 4817 of this title to be incompetent to stand trial due to a mental disease or mental defect.

(3) Is not indicted upon hearing by grand jury by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense, duly certified to the court.

(4) Upon trial by court or jury is acquitted by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense; the court before which such person is tried or is to be tried for such offense, shall hold a hearing for the purpose of determining whether such person should be committed to the custody of the Commissioner of Mental Health. Such person may be confined in jail or some other suitable place by order of the court pending hearing for a period not exceeding 15 days.

(b) When a person is found to be incompetent to stand trial, has not been indicted by reason of insanity for the alleged offense, or has been acquitted by reason of insanity at the time of the alleged offense, the person shall be entitled to have counsel appointed from Vermont Legal Aid to represent the person. The Department of Mental Health and, if applicable, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living shall be entitled to appear and call witnesses at the proceeding.

Sec. 3. 13 V.S.A. § 4822 is amended to read:

§ 4822. FINDINGS AND ORDER; PERSONS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

(a) If the court finds that the person is a person in need of treatment or a patient in need of further treatment as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 7101, the court shall issue an order of commitment directed to the Commissioner of Mental Health that shall admit the person to the care and custody of the Department of Mental Health for an indeterminate period. In any case involving personal injury or threat of personal injury, the committing court may issue an order requiring a court hearing before a person committed under this section may be discharged from custody.

(b) An order of commitment issued pursuant to this section shall have the same force and effect as an order issued under 18 V.S.A. §§ 7611–7622, and a person committed under this order shall have the same status and the same rights, including the right to receive care and treatment, to be examined and discharged, and to apply for and obtain judicial review of his or her case, as a person ordered committed under 18 V.S.A. §§ 7611–7622.

(c)(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (b) of this section, at least 10 days prior to the proposed discharge of any person committed under this section, the Commissioner of Mental Health shall give notice of the discharge to the committing court and State’s Attorney of the county where the prosecution originated. In all cases requiring a hearing prior to discharge of a person found incompetent to stand trial under section 4817 of this title, the

hearing shall be conducted by the committing court issuing the order under that section. In all other cases, when the committing court orders a hearing under subsection (a) of this section or when, in the discretion of the Commissioner of Mental Health, a hearing should be held prior to the discharge, the hearing shall be held in the Family Division of the Superior Court to determine if the committed person is no longer a person in need of treatment or a patient in need of further treatment as set forth in subsection (a) of this section. Notice of the hearing shall be given to the Commissioner, the State's Attorney of the county where the prosecution originated, the committed person, and the person's attorney. Prior to the hearing, the State's Attorney may enter an appearance in the proceedings and may request examination of the patient by an independent psychiatrist, who may testify at the hearing.

(2)(A) This subdivision (2) shall apply when a person is committed to the care and custody of the Commissioner of Mental Health under this section after having been found:

(i) not guilty by reason of insanity; or

(ii) incompetent to stand trial, provided that the person's criminal case has not been dismissed.

(B)(i) When a person has been committed under this section, the Commissioner shall provide notice to the State's Attorney of the county where the prosecution originated or to the Office of the Attorney General if that office prosecuted the case:

- (I) at least 10 days prior to discharging the person from:
- (aa) the care and custody of the Commissioner; or
- (bb) a hospital or a secure residential recovery facility to the community on an order of nonhospitalization pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 7618;
- (II) at least 10 days prior to the expiration of a commitment order issued under this section if the Commissioner does not seek continued treatment; or
- (III) any time that the person elopes from the custody of the Commissioner.
- (ii) When the State’s Attorney or Attorney General receives notice under subdivision (i) of this subdivision (B), the Office shall provide notice of the action to any victim of the offense for which the person has been charged who has not opted out of receiving notice.
- (iii) As used in this subdivision (B), “victim” has the same meaning as in section 5301 of this title.

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Sec. 4. Vermont Rule of Criminal Procedure 16.1 is amended to read:

RULE 16.1. DISCLOSURE TO THE PROSECUTION

(a) The Person of the Defendant.

(1) Notwithstanding the initiation of judicial proceedings, and subject to constitutional limitations, upon motion and notice a judicial officer may require the defendant to:

* * *

(H) provide specimens of ~~his~~ the defendant's handwriting; ~~and~~

(I) submit to a reasonable physical or medical inspection of ~~his~~ the defendant's body or, if notice is given by the defendant that sanity is in issue or that expert testimony will be offered as provided in Rule 12.1, to a reasonable mental examination by a psychiatrist or other expert; and

(J) submit to a reasonable mental examination by a psychiatrist or other expert when a court ordered examiner pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4814(a)(2) or (4) reports that a defendant is not competent to stand trial.

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* * * Reports and Studies * * *

Sec. 5. CORRECTIONS; ASSESSMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICES

(a) On or before January 1, 2022, the Departments of Corrections and of Mental Health shall jointly submit an inventory and evaluation of the mental health services provided by the entity with whom the Department of Corrections contracts for health care services to the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions, on Health Care, and on Judiciary and to the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Judiciary.

(b) The evaluation shall include:

(1) a comparison as to how the type, frequency, and timeliness of mental health services provided in a correctional setting differ from those services

available in the community, recognizing that comparison to currently available community services does not necessarily establish the standard of care for best practices;

(2) a comparison as to how the type, frequency, and timeliness of mental health services differ among Vermont correctional settings, including between men's and women's facilities, and from those mental health services provided to individuals under the care and custody of the Department of Corrections incarcerated in an out-of-state correctional facility;

(3) an assessment as to how the use of a for-profit entity with whom the Department of Corrections contracts for health care services affects costs or quality of care in correctional settings;

(4) an assessment as to whether the Department of Mental Health should provide oversight authority for mental health services provided by the entity with whom the Department of Corrections contracts for health care services;
and

(5) information as to how the memorandum of understanding executed by the Departments of Corrections and of Mental Health impacts the mental health services provided by the entity with whom the Department of Corrections contracts for health care services and whether it is adequately addressing needs of those individuals with severe illness or in need of inpatient care.

(c) In conducting the work required by this section, the Departments of Corrections and of Mental Health shall ensure that social and racial equity issues are considered, including issues related to transgender and gender nonconforming persons.

Sec. 6. REPORTS; FORENSIC CARE WORKING GROUP; PROSECUTOR NOTIFICATION; COMPETENCY RESTORATION MODELS

(a) On or before July 15, 2021, the Department of Mental Health shall convene working groups of interested stakeholders to provide recommendations necessary to carry out the provisions in subsections (b) and (c) of this section, including as appropriate:

(1) a representative from the Department of Corrections;

(2) a representative from the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living;

(3) a representative from the Department of Buildings and General Services;

(4) the Chief Superior Judge;

(5) a representative from the Department of State's Attorneys and

Sheriffs;

(6) a representative from the Office of the Attorney General;

(7) a representative from the Office of the Defender General;

(8) the Director of Health Care Reform or designee;

(9) a representative, appointed by Vermont Care Partners;

(10) a representative, appointed by Vermont Legal Aid's Mental Health Project;

(11) a representative, appointed by the Vermont Medical Society;

(12) three crime victims representatives, appointed by the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services;

(13) the Mental Health Care Ombudsman established pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 7259 or designee;

(14) a representative of the designated hospitals, appointed by the Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Care Systems;

(15) three individuals with lived experience of mental illness, at least one of whom has lived experience of the criminal justice system or the civil commitment system, or both, appointed by Vermont Psychiatric Survivors;

(16) a representative, appointed by the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council; and

(17) any other interested party permitted by the Commissioner of Mental Health.

(b)(1) On or before August 1, 2022, the Department of Mental Health shall submit a final report to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee and the Chairs of the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions, on Health Care, and on Judiciary and of the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Judiciary addressing:

(A) any gaps in the current mental health and criminal justice system structure related to individuals incompetent to stand trial or who are adjudicated not guilty by reason of insanity;

(B) opportunities to:

(i) improve public safety and address the treatment needs for individuals incompetent to stand trial or who are adjudicated not guilty by reason of insanity; and

(ii) consider the importance of victims' rights in the forensic care process;

(C) competency restoration models used in other states, including both models that do not rely on involuntary medication to restore competency and how cases where competency is not restored are addressed;

(D) models used in other states to determine public safety risks and the means used to address such risks, including guilty but mentally ill verdicts in criminal cases;

(E) due process requirements for defendants held without adjudication of a crime and presumed innocent;

(F) processes regarding other mental conditions affecting competence or sanity, including intellectual disabilities, traumatic brain injury, and dementia;

(G) models for forensic treatment, including the size, scope, and fiscal impact of any forensic treatment facility; and

(H) any additional recommendations.

(2) On or before January 15, 2022, the Department shall submit a preliminary report to the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions, on Health Care, and on Judiciary and to the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Judiciary summarizing the work completed pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection to date, except with regard to the work completed pursuant to subdivision (1)(G).

(c) On or before February 15, 2022, the Department of Mental Health shall submit a report to the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions, on Health Care, and on Judiciary and to the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Judiciary that:

(1) assesses the necessity of notification to the prosecutor upon becoming aware that individuals on orders of nonhospitalization pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 7618 are not complying with the order or that the alternative treatment is not adequate to meet the individual's treatment needs, including any recommendations:

(A) necessary to clarify the process;

(B) addressing what facts and circumstances should trigger the Commissioner's duty to notify the prosecutor; and

(C) addressing steps that the prosecutor should take after receiving the notification; and

(2) summarizes the work completed to date by the working groups regarding the models for forensic treatment, including the size, scope, and fiscal impact of any forensic treatment facility, pursuant to subdivision (b)(1)(G) of this section.

(d)(1) In conducting the work required by this section, including evaluations for forensic treatment facility models, pursuant to subsections (b) and (c) of this section, the working group shall ensure:

(A) that social and racial equity issues are considered, including issues related to transgender and gender nonconforming persons; and

(B) consistency with the General Assembly’s policy in 18 V.S.A. § 7629(c) of working “toward a mental health system that does not require coercion or the use of involuntary medication.”

(2) These considerations shall be reflected in the final report submitted pursuant to subdivision (b)(1) of this section and the report submitted pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

(e) The Department shall access regional or national expertise to present models to the working group for review, including any model recommended by members of the working group.

(f) The final report submitted pursuant to subdivision (b)(1) of this section and the report submitted pursuant to subdivision (c)(1) of this section shall include proposed draft legislation addressing any identified needed changes to statute.

(g) Members of the working group who are neither State employees nor otherwise paid to participate in the working group in their professional capacity shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses for attending meetings as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010.

Sec. 7. [Deleted.]

* * * Appropriations * * *

Sec. 8. APPROPRIATIONS

The sum of \$530,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Mental Health to be allocated as follows:

(1) \$250,000.00 to contract with Vermont Legal Aid for the purpose of providing legal representation in commitment proceedings pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4820.

(2) \$250,000.00 to provide legal representation and independent psychiatric evaluations in connection with commitment proceedings pursuant to 13 V.S.A. § 4820.

(3) \$25,000.00 to support the work of the Forensic Care Working Group established by Sec. 6 of this act.

(4) \$5,000.00 for per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted by 32 V.S.A. § 1010 to members of the Forensic Care Working Group established by Sec. 6 of this act.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.

Date Governor signed bill: June 7, 2021